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CONCORD

A Journalistic Ministry of Students at Luther Seminary

April 22, 2009

St. Paul, Minnesota

Volume 38, Issue 8

Giggles when hears "Missional Church"



Pres. Richard Bliese



Rev. Rick Foss



Dr. Fred Gaiser



Prof. Gracia Grindal



Dr. Mary Jane Haemig

Knows Date of Armageddon!



Dr. Craig Koester



Dr. Karoline Lewis

Who are the people in your neighborhood?



Dr. David Lose



Dean Patricia Lull



Dr. Amy Marga



Dr. Alan Padgett



Dr. Steven Paulson



Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker



Dr. Walter "Skip" Sundberg



Dr. Mark Throntveit

Surprisingly sunny in Saint Paul

By Buntausa Amos, page 3

Joining the Babel demolition crew

By Mark Orf, page 6

Matthew 18: It's worth a try.

By Michael Rogness, page 8

Plus: Online whisper campaigns, putting down the smack talk, Luther slings mud and the longest letter from your editor ever!

Letter from the Editor

By **Natalie Gessert**
Concord Managing Editor

My grandmother called me at the beginning of Lent and asked me what I had given up. “My dignity,” I replied. Of course it was meant to be funny and get a little rise out of her (mission accomplished), but I did not realize what kind of truth I would be speaking about myself in the days to come.

All of us remember school days in which something about us – our bodies, clothing style, interests, behavior or reputation – were discussed by others in ways that betrayed and slandered our best hopes for ourselves. Often this treachery occurred behind our backs and we may have been the last to know. “Natalie Fatalie” was my own given moniker for a number of difficult years. Considering my first day of sixth grade began with an apple-print pantsuit with matching scrunchie, oversized bifocal gold-rimmed aviator glasses, red-banded braces and matching headgear, I suppose I didn’t help matters.

Those school days were often heavy to wade through. A gaggle of friends could at least provide a veneer of protection. Days of “Natalie Fatalie” or the childhood misnomer you were given, felt as if personal dignity was stolen. Somehow, my own worth belonged to “them” and “they” could do with it what they wanted. But as I resigned my dignity during those years, I only recently learned about the dark troubles that come with “dignity theft.”

While I often held a certain pride in speaking well of others, I discovered clearly what it is like to wield the ugly weapon of another’s reputation. Recently in the midst of school, with its future hopes and uncertainties, I began to spit poison about a friend. First expressing frustration, then, when I wasn’t caught, moving on to dehumanization by making this person an object of my fears. Then, sitting at catechism recitations I heard some tentative renditions of the 8th commandment. To my horror, I recognized that in this small community if others knew of my behavior, they might continue to treat the commandment tentatively or as a mere academic requirement - even worse, as a joke.

Not only did I set aside my own beliefs about God and God’s expectations of me and others in my own community, but I found my own humanity relinquished. Indeed, I gave up my dignity for Lent, but found it blessedly recovered in

Editor to page 8

From the Mann himself

You shall not bear false witness...



By **John Mann**
Seminary Pastor

In the Large Catechism Martin Luther notes the original context of this eighth commandment is the court of law. There, people could court judges and gain political advantage over the weak and poor and crush him or her by means of false witness.

So too, in the spiritual realm, Luther notes that, “...people bear false witness against their neighbors (thus) they must endure having the world call them heretics, apostates, even seditions and desperate scoundrels.”

In both of these realms (two kingdoms), the above offenses are stealing and doing harm to people in a fashion equally harmful as those prohibited by the 5th and 7th commandments. Again, quoting Brother Martin, “Besides our own body, our spouse, and our temporal property, we have one more treasure indispensable to us, namely, our good reputation. For it is important that we do not live among people in public disgrace and dishonor. Therefore, God does not want our neighbors deprived of their reputation honor and character any more than of their money and possessions. The third aspect of this commandment... forbids all sins of the tongue by which we injure or offend against a neighbor... It is a common, pernicious plague that everyone would rather hear evil than good about their neighbor.” So says Luther.

I fear the truth is that in all of our temptations to bear false witness against our neighbor, we betray a need to improve our reputation or status at the expense of our neighbors. We simply engage in a competition with others to be thought better of than they are. The sad truth is that it sometimes works for awhile. Often though, the truth slowly emerges that the content of our conversation is not to be trusted, and the dynamic of our relationship is to stand on the face of others so that we might be taller. Such justice is sometimes more harmful to us than anything we could have said of our neighbor.

A second kind of false witness concerns me as much. It is the false witness we bear in the presence of neighbors toward God. No, we don’t spread malicious rumors about the Holy One (blessed be God). But, we frequently advocate partial truths and whole-hearted misconceptions about God as though they were certain. In our passion to defeat our neighbors’ teaching about, or perception of God, we often use scripture and theology as weapons to prove ourselves and put down

Mann to page 8

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Truth be upon us

By Halise Ozdemir
M.A. Senior

Christianity and Islam are two monotheistic faiths which are known as Abrahamic religions. They have many commonalities one of which is the 8th commandment. In this short article I will talk about this commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor!" from a Muslim perspective.

In Islam one of the 99 most beautiful names of God is "the Truth." Hence, one can say that believing in God means believing in the truth, and rejecting the truth is rejecting God.

According to the Qur'an, having faith in God is the foundation of Islamic faith while bearing testimony to this Truth is the first pillar of submission. The opposite of faith is kufur which means covering up the Truth and to lie. It is to break the word, the covenant and the promise; to be a hypocrite. God commands believers to be righteous, even if it is against their own best interests. "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both...Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do..." (An-Nisa 4:35).

The Qur'an envisions a moral society which integrates love, equality, justice and peace. It aims to build a moral society which desires to create moral and responsible individuals. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said that, "Muslim is the one from whose hand and

tongue people are safe." He also said, "None of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

The Qur'anic values and ideals inspire 1.5 billion Muslims from all around the world, yet no Muslim would consider himself or herself an ideal believer. They are limited and do not always live up to their ideals. Although Islam forbids bearing false witness there are instances when some Muslims fail to obey this divine law. For instance, Muslims predominantly believe that those who killed innocent people during the September 11 attacks bore false witness against Islam which clearly forbids aggression and violence. "Whoever kills a human being unjustly... then it is as though he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a human life it is as though he had saved all mankind" (Qur'an 5/32). Similarly, former President Bush's disproportionate reaction to the September 11 attacks and invasion of Iraq on false premises were also false witnesses to the neighbor and to the tenants of Christianity which teaches such noble principles as "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," "love your enemy" and "turn the other cheek."

Both Christianity and Islam teach us to love righteousness, to be truthful and just to our neighbors and forbid bearing false witness. We are not to be unjust, lying and hypocritical. Yet, we as fallible human beings do not always practice what we preach. There is also a tendency to bear false witness not only to our own faith but also to our neighbors. In every religious community there may be those who judge others while they ignore their own faults. We need dialogue as a way to learn the truth of our neighbor and to abstain from false witnessing.

Salt: For more than your freedom fries

By Buntausa Amos
M.Th. Year 1

The journey to America was an exciting one from Abuja, Nigeria to Frankfurt, Germany, to Chicago and finally to Minneapolis. I was told many things about America and Americans. Some of those things are perhaps "false witnesses," while some are not. I was told that Americans are "bad." But on my flight from Abuja to Chicago I was with an American and it was nice meeting him. He was of help connecting from one flight to another. Back here at Luther Seminary, I have discovered that people at Luther Seminary are great, both the students and faculty members. They are ready to give answers to the questions one has. The friends I met so far are making me feel at home. I am only now missing my wife.

I was told that people in Minneapolis-St. Paul make fun of themselves with words. Recently a friend of mine told me about a t-shirt he saw. On it was written, "The Bible made mention of St. Paul, but it never mentioned Minneapolis." It was funny to hear that. I was told that Minnesota is cold. This is true. I came in February and I discovered that the sun does not work in Minnesota.

God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites to guide their living on earth. The eighth commandment says "do not give false witness against your neighbor." The Ten Commandments are categorized into two table. The first to the sixth commandment deals with

our relationship with God. The seventh to tenth deals with our relationship with humans. That is why Jesus in his teaching summarized the Ten Commandments into two: "Love God and your neighbor" (Mark 12:30-31).

A witness is someone who can give an explanation about an event that happened in his or her presence. Christ said to His disciples "...and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). The disciples indeed were witnesses of what they have seen and heard (Acts 1:1-4). That is how we are supposed to be as Christians. To bear false witness against your neighbor is breaking the commands of God. It is also saying something bad against others. A quick guide to check on our lives so we will not bear false witness is this: "Do to others as you will want them do unto you." Let your speech always be seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

False witness is a sin of the tongue. James tells us "From the same mouth comes blessing and curses. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so" (James 3:1-12). False witness is lying against someone. Revelation 21:7 spells the end result of liars. A false witness is a liar (Proverbs 14:5), is deceitful (Proverbs 14:25), will not go unpunished (Proverbs 19:5, 9) and will perish (Proverbs 21:28). False witness is also listed among those sins that come from the heart. Matthew 15:19.

The command is a strong one, "Do not... I am the Lord." But among us, we are called to an offering of peace. PEACE!

Beach preacher

By Amber Marten

M.Div. Intern (Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Torrance, Calif.)

Greetings from sunny Southern California! I thank God each day for so richly blessing me with an exceptional internship site. I work with a fantastic supervisor, gifted staff and mission-minded lay people. Worship is highly experiential and meaningful. Oh, and the location rocks! Last week I surfed and snowboarded within twenty four hours. Enough said. I love this place!

In an attempt to stay in touch with family and friends while on internship, I decided to start blogging. Pictures, questions, songs, ideas and daily events make each entry unique. Years from now it will be cool to look back and reminisce about all the ways I grew and remember all the fantastic experiences I had. On my first Sunday at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Torrance, California, a "Welcome Amber" insert hit the program and a huge mistake was made. On the very bottom edge of the sheet it included,

"If you are interested in reading Amber's blog, you can check it out here..." I love to share personal stories and photos, but question whether the boundaries of my personal life need some higher walls. In one entry I wrote about my experience at the doctor's office from a female perspective. The females laughed hysterically, but not all of my male readers appreciated it. Oops!

Safe to say, blogging has become an addiction and a great conversation piece as new entries hit the screen each week. The problem: many in my congregation read it. As a result, because of that, I don't write half of what I would like to. Knowing that many readers browse my writings I have learned valuable lessons in watching my tongue (or fingers) and sharing only so much. Don't get me wrong, never would I intentionally write something negative about parishioners. But



dang, they say and do some hilarious things and I want to write about it! However, I've learned there's a limit to what I can publicly publish about others in my blog.

Before I begin writing, the eighth commandment reminds me that I need to be truthful and interpret the actions of others in the best possible way. Never should I write something private on my blog that may bring negative light to another person, even if I think it's funny. I'm reminded

Beach preacher to page 14

Bigger is...different

By Odd Inge Tangen

Non-degree international student, Norway

As my stay here at Luther Seminary moves towards an end, I write about the impressions I had of Americans before I came to live here in Minnesota and the ways in which my understanding of people has changed now that I have been here for almost two semesters. Looking back at some of the things I have gotten to experience while being here, I dare claim that the impressions I brought with me have been both true and false. I'll start with a couple of the ones I believe might contain some evidence of truth.

My first encounter with the United States was New York City. As I was trying to find my way around in the city between skyscrapers and multitudes of people, my impression that Americans like "big stuff" and that "size matters" seemed to be not too far off the target. Coming from a small town of seven thousand people on an island on the west coast of Norway, the Big Apple was overwhelming, to say the least. But as time has gone by, not only have I come to see that American cities are bigger than ours, so is almost everything else. In general, Americans seem to drive bigger cars than Norwegians, have bigger and better roads (thanks be to God!), bigger buildings, bigger malls, bigger bottles of shampoo (the one I bought in August is still not empty!), bigger servings when you go out to eat and you get bigger cups of coffee at the coffee shops. Even the hymnal, the ELW, is twice the size compared to the one used in Norway.

Another impression I had of Americans before I came to the United

States was related to the teaching of theology. I had heard from former students that most of the courses offered at Luther had a very practical approach and yet kept a vigorous academic pace. This was one of the main reasons why I wanted to study at Luther Seminary. This is also an impression I have come to see is true and something I have enjoyed while being here.

On the other hand, my impression of how Americans relate to the rest of the world was perhaps not very positive before I moved to Minnesota. It seemed to me that the United States did not show much interest in consulting with the rest of the world prior to making important and wide-reaching decisions – decisions that may even affect Norway. This made me fear that this lack of interest in what was going on outside of the USA was also representative of people in general.

However, my assumption turned out to be false. As I have come to know quite a few Americans while being here, I have been surprised in a very positive way at the interest shown and how much so many know about Norway. I cannot remember all the times and all the many people who have asked me about my native country: about mountains and fjords, rosemaling, lutefisk and lefse. Also, many have asked how things are done differently in Norway compared to here in America. Being a Norwegian in Minnesota might have helped, but nevertheless, the openness and interest in what I bring with me to this community has made me feel at home, and I give thanks for this!

Breaking down to build back up?

Triple trouble

By Mary Stoneback
M.A. Junior

What does it mean to bear false witness? There are obvious answers to this question, such as “you shouldn’t lie,” “you shouldn’t gossip about others” and “you shouldn’t make things up that aren’t true.” To be honest is to build others up. To be dishonest is to tear others down. However, is there such a thing as a white lie? And what about those instances where deception takes on a life of its own?

I am a triplet, and one of the unique things I have found is that I always have someone to keep me honest. When two other people have experienced the same event at the same time and have shared the same emotions for most of our growing years, there are always at least two others that know the truth about many situations and occurrences throughout life. However, there was one unique incident that occurred in our junior year of high school that illustrates how a moment of deception can grow its own feet and live its own life.

It occurred at the homecoming dance our junior year of high school. We each wanted to look our best and it so happened, as it often did, we ended up dressing and fixing our hair the same. We made our way to the Homecoming Dance with each of our respective dates. As the evening progressed, without discussion, we spontaneously switched dates as we danced. Unbeknownst to our dates, we each finished the evening’s date with the other’s friend.

Our dates never caught on and the next day when we tried to tell them they did not believe it! We had lied and gotten away with it. But, what was most interesting about this spontaneous moment of deception was that even when we tried to admit it, our dates (boyfriends, at a later time) would not believe it.

This has become a story we laugh about at times when we gather as a trio still today. However, it illustrates how deception can take on its own life and how no matter what you do or say, you cannot make it right. It is what it is and it has stayed that way ever since.

Question: did this unintended act of deception harm or tear down? The answer is, of course, “no.” We are all friends, yet with those young men (and acquaintances and to this day) they still do not believe that we switched dates on them.

Sticks and stones...

By Josh Enderson
M.Div. Middler

“Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me!” How many times have we heard that growing up? In order to repair our hurt emotions, we were comforted with this dangerous little phrase. We were taught at an early age that, in the grand scheme of things, words really don’t matter. That they are powerless. I would beg to differ.

More often than not, words are our main tool in breaking others down. Sure, every so often we would like to take after someone with sticks and stones, but there are laws against that sort of thing. So, we go to the next best thing: our tongues. We lash out, either to others face or behind their back with a weapon far more deadly than the sharpest blade. With a few choice words, we can do an astonishing amount of damage. Words can sever. Words can scar. Words can kill.

But what is forgotten is that our words were not given to us for this reason. Our words, things that we so often abuse, are a meant as a gift! In her book *When God is Silent*, Barbara Brown Taylor speaks about God’s bestowal of the gift of speech at creation. She writes, “When God is through with it, the dust [i.e. humanity] will exercise God’s own dominion—not by flexing its muscle but by using its tongue. Up to this point, God has owned the monopoly on speech...Now, in this act of shocking generosity, God’s stock goes public.”

God’s unique ability of speech is shared with us as a gift. The very thing that had brought order from chaos and separated light from dark was and is bestowed on us! The words that we speak are a continuation of God’s creational words in the beginning. Our words have power. They are not spoken into an empty vacuum, but are received and absorbed by others. They have the ability to create or to annihilate, to break down and to build up. Words are far from powerless.

Sticks and stones can break my bones. And words can do the same...

Law(yers) and Gospel

By Michael J. Mannisto
M.Div. Senior

Lawyers and “cheap grace” do have some similarities: many people think neither should exist. That is, until they are in trouble. As a former attorneys, many of us may think of ourselves as part of law enforcement, but I think we have the reputation of being general violators of the 8th commandment. Could both be true?

First of all, lawyers are required to follow “Rules of Professional Conduct.” Under these rules, attorneys are not to lie or permit our clients to lie under oath. Therefore, one might think our “professional conduct” mirrors the 8th commandment. But the problem lies with Luther’s explanation of the commandment, consistent with loving

the neighbor, asking “what does this mean for us?” This is where the Law condemns the lawyer. The commentary declares we must look to our neighbor and: “...defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way.”

If a case goes to trial, it is the lawyer’s job to explain our client’s actions in the kindest way and our adversary’s in the worst light possible, with the opposing party doing the same. The hope is that the truth will be exposed during this adversarial proceeding.

There are many ways to explain your adversary’s actions in a detrimental way including, but not limited to, calling witnesses to

Lawyers to page 13

Bricks and mortar

Mark Orf

M.Div. Senior

“What are you going to build?” is the question many people asked Heather and I as we were preparing to go on a mission trip to Tanzania. Even though this was the fifth trip to Tanzania for the congregation, we had never been ourselves. We heard the stories from many of the people that had gone before and none of those stories included any sort of building project. As a matter of fact, the stories that we heard from those that had been to Tanzania before were not filled with much labor at all. So, Heather and I did not know how to answer the question about building houses, schools, or whatever else others expected while in Tanzania. The stories were mostly about the brothers and sisters in Christ that they share ministry with in Tanzania.

This lack of something tangible related to physical work that we may do in Tanzania lead us to be able to not “tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them or to destroy their reputations,” whether the neighbor was in Minnesota or Tanzania. On the other hand we were not able to “come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.” All we were left to do was divert the questions altogether and we did not like that option much, because after all, we want to be truthful about others.

Now that we are on the other side of the trip, we admit that when we were in Tanzania we did not do very much physical labor at all. As a matter of fact, I think the only thing we did that seemed like labor was help plant fifty (or so) trees – and I only planted one because I did not want to get my hands dirty! But, the work that we did was build relationships with some true and loving brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Building these relationships has built a foundation that is stronger than any structure that we may have built while there. After spending time with my new brothers and sisters, I realized that they did not need me to come and build structures for them. They are very capable of doing that type of work for themselves. I also realized that even though the church in Minnesota gives the congregation in Tanzania monetary support, further financial giving while we were visiting was not what they were interested in from us. They were more interested in learning about our lives and building relationships that stretched across the miles from Tanzania to Minnesota.

Because of those relationships we were brought into the life of the people of the Tanzania. Entering this world showed us the true joy and happiness that is in the heart of our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. This joy came from deep within their hearts which were full of the love of Jesus Christ for their

neighbors, both local and international.

Another joy that came out of those relationships was the deeply felt interest in our lives. Even though the conditions that people live in are subpar to Western standards of living, the interest was in the things that are happening in our lives. We shared stories and even offered up deep concerned and personal interests that our brothers and sisters in Christ can pray for. We received more than any amount of money we could have brought in the desire to pray for our needs, desires and indeed, whole lives. I can say that if we had not given any money to the congregation, we would have still been welcomed into a world of love that we may not have experienced before.

So, now when we speak the building in Tanzania, we don't reference buildings. Bricks and mortar are wonderful things, but this is not what made our trip to Tanzania a joy. Instead, we now have many relationships with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. They have needs, of course, but we now know our neighbors by face and by name. Now, when we speak of our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, it is easy to “come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light” because that is what we found in their hearts. We are of the same Spirit and we are so thankful.

Clash of the Titans: film and primetime faceoff at Luther

By Trey Daum

M.Div. Junior

While at Luther Seminary you may find yourself in classes, with friends or deep in the stacks of the library, trying to find the solution to our problem: What can be done about sin? The proposed solutions are abundant: learn a new discipline, become more purpose driven, live your best life now – and the list goes on. As we look more deeply into the 8th commandment regarding false witness, a new solution has emerged. Brackets. One part March Madness, one part IMDB, a dash of Facebook (or just generic email) and voilà! The Luther Seminary Movie Madness Bracket Showdown. Students, faculty, staff and alumni just like

you spent March suggesting favorite films. The flicks with the most nominations made the bracket. Each day when the need to procrastinate arose, voters filled out the form and watched as midnight brought results for each new round.

The final two pitted “The Shawshank Redemption” against “The Dark Knight.” And the winner was...? After voting members enjoyed delicious fare catered by the Wooden Spoon and watched the top two finalists, votes were cast and “The Shawshank Redemption” emerged in victory!

So what does this have to do with the solution to sin or even the 8th commandment? When you're sitting at lunch eating with friends and the discussion dies down,

how do you spur conversation? You probably lie, or slander or speak ill. But what if there was a gratifying, competitive, engaging, riveting new topic to discuss? Enter: Brackets. “But,” you say, “the movie bracket is over... back to sinning.” Don't despair!

The Luther Seminary TV Show Bracket of Glory Fun is in full swing, and you can get in on it. E-mail Frank Johnson (fjohnson001@luthersem.edu) with the subject line ‘TV Bracket’ and become part of the voting madness. Your meal conversations will take a turn for the interesting.*

**Freedom from sin and despair not guaranteed.*

Thou shall not create enemy images of others

By Theresa Latini

Assistant Professor of Congregational and Community Care

As a young child, I, like so many others throughout church history, was taught the Ten Commandments as part of my catechetical instruction. I remember that some commandments appeared rather inapplicable to me at the time. There seemed little chance that I would commit murder or adultery. Other commandments, like “thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” which was explained to me to mean, “Do not tell lies to or about other people,” were both easier to understand and harder to follow. As an adult, I find the same to be true. Furthermore, when I examine the life of the church, particularly its polarizing discourse and competing factions, I discover that I am not alone.

I suspect that this situation in the church stems from a failure to grapple with the depth of meaning in the eighth commandment. In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther describes three applications of this commandment, the last of which I want to reflect on briefly. He writes, “[T]his commandment forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we may injure ... our neighbor.” These sins of the tongue include speaking behind a person’s back, slander, the tendency to prefer hearing evil rather than hearing good of others, judging others’ sin (in contrast to knowing others’ sin) and publicly speaking ill of another person regardless of the veracity of our claims.

To Luther’s list, I would add “enemy images.” By enemy images, I mean static assessments of persons or groups whereby we classify them as wrong, bad, immoral, fundamentally flawed, etc. For example, “He’s power hungry” or “She’s completely incompetent.” “He’s narcissistic” or, “They’re a bunch of conservatives/liberals.” Such sweeping evaluations allow us to dismiss others rather than encounter them as

fellow creatures made in the image of God. We can explain away their opinions and concerns rather than seeing and hearing them fully.

These enemy images are formed in our hearts and minds long before we speak them. Thus, the transgression of this commandment includes more than the sins of the tongue; it includes the judgments we harbor against others and the narratives we weave about them, which prevent us from seeing them as they truly are: persons created in the image of God.

In light of our human predicament—i.e., our sin and suffering—we might wonder how, if at all, we might see and hear and speak of others truly rather than falsely. While our ability to live in conformity with this commandment is ultimately dependent upon God’s grace and an eschatological reality, we can engage in some concrete practices of discourse that support us in our attempts to speak with integrity about others. For example, we can learn to differentiate our observations from our evaluations, which is a basic skill in the practice of Nonviolent Communication.

An observation is a concrete statement or thought that reflects what we are hearing, seeing or remembering in reference to a specific context, event, or interaction, whereas evaluations are our interpretations about what we are hearing, seeing or remembering. By differentiating rather than conflating our observations and evaluations, we implicitly acknowledge that we cannot know another’s heart or mind. We admit our inability to judge others or even ourselves with complete accuracy. Moreover, we decrease the likelihood that we will bear false witness against others. Consequently, our worship might be pleasing to God, for we cannot, on the one hand, praise God and then, on the other hand, denigrate those who are made in God’s image.

Theological Superhero of the Month:

Martin Luther

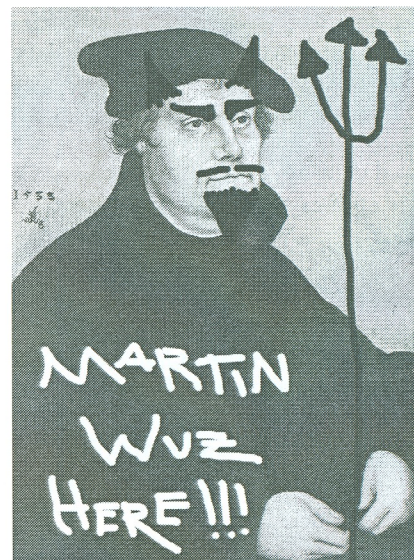
Strengths:

- He’s the pea under your mattress, the bee in your bonnet and the zit on your nose. Hear this prophecy, O ELCA and great churches of the world: “When I die I want to be a ghost and pester the bishops, priests, and godless monks so that they have more trouble with a dead Luther than they could have had before with a thousand living ones.”
- Always knew the value of a jolly gut: “We old folks have to find our cushions and pillows in our tankards. Strong beer is the milk of the old.”
- This man speaks good news, only second to the words of Christ: “Who loves not wine, women and song, Remains a fool his whole life long”
- He lays down a good verse, too: “Whoever drinks beer, he is quick to sleep;

whoever sleeps long, does not sin; whoever does not sin, enters Heaven! Thus, let us drink beer! (there is no beer in heaven, so let us drink it here).”

Weaknesses:

- It seems like a bad idea to refer to a man with brute military force at his disposal as, “[employing] most wicked tricks... next to Satan there is no greater rascal than the pope. He has plotted evil things against me, but he’ll be the last... he is a Florentine bastard.”
- While the Pope’s theology may trouble the Lutheran soul, he may have preempted the End Times trash-talk: “I feel much freer now that I am certain the pope is the Antichrist”
- This guy was never going to cure cancer: “Reason is a whore, the greatest enemy that faith has.”



- It’s funny now, but talking this way to your spouse could cause early demise: “Your manure cure didn’t help me either” (Written to his wife regarding a potential cure for a skin rash).

Matthew 18: Take three and call me in the morning

By Dr. Michael Rogness
Professor Emeritus Homiletics

I've been asked to reflect on community life at the seminary and I guess I'm qualified because I've been here for awhile, still hanging around after (official) retirement.

So, how do we treat each other? First and most basic: We treat others with respect. This isn't rocket science. It's Human Relations 101, treating each other as worthwhile human beings, or in the language appropriate to this school, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

One of the best pieces of advice I received soon after arriving here came from a long-time professor: Remember, around here there are no stupid questions. I might think a question is weird or uninformed, but I need to assume it's asked as genuine inquiry and respond to it as such. In other words, listen to others with respect.

The easiest way of arguing, the most fun and absolutely the most unfair and unhelpful, is to argue *ad hominem*. To dismiss somebody by saying, "you're from South Dakota so what do you know about this or that?" Or, "you're from Edina, so of course that's what you think." Or, "You're from the [fill in LCA, ALC, LC-MS or whatever], so naturally you would say that." Or, "You think that because you're prejudiced." Listen to people's opinions for their reasoning and don't label people by their backgrounds, etc.

As everybody around here knew, I was opposed to the adoption of Called to Common Mission (CCM, the agreement made with the Episcopal Church). One of the great privileges of this particular seminary is that faculty and students have been free to express their opinions publicly without recrimination on all the issues that confront us as a school and church. As a matter of fact we had more faculty members publicly on both sides of the CCM issue than at any ELCA seminary, not surprisingly, I suppose, because we are the largest faculty. Yet the more remarkable fact of that whole drama was that one's friendships on our faculty crisscrossed both sides of the issue. Basically, we knew how to disagree and we did so. I think we did so here better than how the issue was handled in other areas of the ELCA.

I do worry about people who are what I would describe as psychologically fragile. Some people see offense where none is intended or bristle at what they think is some slight. One of the most difficult parts of being a pastor is that you have to be both thin-skinned and

thick-skinned, and more importantly knowing when to be which. To put it bluntly, you take some crap as a pastor. People have powerful feelings about religion and they will not always argue fairly or hold their tempers. If you stoop to their level, you're dead.

I'm also concerned about instances of a victim mentality."One aspect of a victim mentality is when somebody says something you feel is offensive or insulting and therefore you assume the speaker meant it to be so. It may be that the other person didn't mean it that way at all, but you assume the worst. Even the Catechism says we should put the best construction on what our neighbor says or does. So, how do we deal with disagreements, misunderstandings, or offenses? The constitution of my former parish includes the following paragraph: How should matters of controversy and offense be dealt with? The answer: "We follow the advice of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. The first step is to speak to the other person - a step we often skip. It's a lot easier and more fun to complain to others. But Jesus tells us to go to that other person first. If that doesn't work, then Jesus has outlined the next steps. I could give several examples in seminary life where relationships deteriorated when that first step was not taken. I can also give examples of where it was followed and relationships were restored.

In my first semester here, three students asked to talk to me after class. They asked me to clean up my language. I asked what they meant and they replied that I had referred to the class as "you guys," when half the group was female. They were right. I had. I replied that I had come from the parish, where I spent a lot of time with youth, and that today, teenaged girls generally refer to themselves as "you guys." "Guys" has become an inclusive term and I certainly didn't mean to exclude female students from my lecture. The three students said they didn't consider "guys" to be inclusive. Simple enough. I tried from then on to avoid the term. These students could have left class and complained about me to others, but they were forthright enough to speak to me first. Matthew 18 worked, thank you very much.

I'm not so naïve as to think there aren't personal frictions around here. Some people are not as sensitive to others as they should be. Some people are too thin-skinned and see offense too easily. As I implied earlier, a good pastor is sensitive when needed, yet also needs the skin of an elephant. A good sense of humor keeps one's sanity around here, but that's topic for another article. I really do believe in Matthew 18:15-17.

Mann from page 2

others. In such witness, as Marshall McLuen used to argue, the medium contradicts the message.

The good news can never rightly boost us up at the expense of others. God simply does not work that way and to suggest otherwise is to create God in our inadequate image rather than the other way around. It is to bear false witness in an absolute sense. We cannot communicate the truth about God by brutalizing others, no matter the historic precedent for it. To witness adequately to the gospel truth it must be received first as gospel and only then as truth.

In all of this we are challenged to be truthful not to our benefit, but as a blessing toward God and neighbor.

Editor from page 2

stark confession to this person, through absolution and reconciliation.

The 8th commandment is very important for us at Luther. We all carry pain suffered at the hands of those who have betrayed and lied about us. A number of this issue's articles examine these hurts and art of deception. Dr. Michael Rogness exposes the difficulties of living in a small community, lifting up ways in which we may survive one another, even bless one another. Halise Ozdemir, Inge Tangen and Buntausa Amos's articles describe

how holding one another in truth is needed across national and religious lines. Contemporary communications are discussed as Ryan Torma and Lindsay Colwell examine networking and information technology.

Yet, what is strange about our work here at Luther Seminary goes beyond how close we live to one another. While we manage to live in relative peace, we are called here specifically to learn how to talk about others: we

Editor to page 10

Who do you say that your neighbor is?

Practicing hospitality of belief

By Mary Hess

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend them, [think and] speak well of them and put the best construction on everything.¹

Much has been written about the first seven commandments in this journal, and a good case can be made that each of the Ten Commandments is hard to keep. But as I've been thinking about the 8th commandment, I think it might hold the dubious distinction of being the one commandment that academic life actually *encourages* us to break.

Where else are there incentives to take apart someone's argument and lift up only the most problematic shards of meaning to view? Where else are you invited so strongly to practice a "hermeneutics of suspicion?" Where else does it matter not so much how congruent your argument is in relation to your life, but how consistent it is philosophically? I confess to some frustration at Luther Seminary. Far too often our goal of practicing critical *reflection* has become, instead, the practice of critical competition.

Have you ever heard someone express a kind of self-satisfied arrogance at their superior grasp of an idea and in doing so rule everyone who disagrees with them outside of their small circle of truth? Such games may make for interesting intellectual competition, but they surely do not proclaim the Good News very effectively. Far from seeking to "put the best construction on" a differing theological position, such articulations actually move us in the opposite direction.

I've listened to far too many people share their confusion and pain over the years, struggling with their Lutheran identity precisely because they fear that "being Lutheran" means participating in a narrow rendering of a specific form of Christian belief. I am not Lutheran, but even I can see that this is not a way of being Lutheran that bears much congruence with Luther's Small Catechism and his attempts in that text to support people living out God's commandments.

I believe that being a good learner means being able to explain clearly the specific position you're arguing with so well that an advocate for that position would recognize it. If you're not doing so, you are breaking the 8th commandment.

Perhaps you are someone who believes deeply that the texts of the Bible are permeated with misogyny and that, since words matter, God must never be referred to in worship using male pronouns or male roles. Can you gracefully make an argument for praying "Our Father who art in heaven?"

Perhaps you are someone who believes deeply that justification by grace through faith alone means that there is literally nothing you can do actively to participate in God's creation in the world. Can you step outside of that position long enough to make the case for how and why Christians must participate in advocacy against war and poverty? Perhaps you are someone who believes scripture supports ordaining

gay people. Might you make a thoughtful case for how the Bible condemns homosexuality?

These are only a few of the differences of belief existing amongst us here at Luther; doubtlessly, there are many, many more. Rather than entering into a competition for narrowing truth through doubt, why not venture into the practice of "believing" for a change?²

I like the way one of my colleagues framed an assignment in a class. This colleague asks that students "befriend" an argument, finding ways into it so that they can explain its internal logic and meaning *before* trying to critique it. Such a practice doesn't mean you can't or won't finally come to a clear statement of belief that will contradict someone else's, but it does mean that you won't attempt a critique until you're certain that you fully understand the other person's position and that you do so from a stance of respect.

I'm a Roman Catholic layperson. For the last couple of decades my church has been riveted by arguments over the ordination of women, the most effective route to ending abortion and how to handle sexual abuse by priests. In the midst of some of the most contentious of such discussions, Cardinal Bernardin helped to articulate a set of principles for dialogue.³ These principles have proven, time and time again, to be crucial in helping God's people to find their way in community. One of the principles Bernardin articulated bears a striking resemblance to Martin Luther's annotation of the 8th commandment. Luther wrote that we should "put the best construction on everything" and Cardinal Bernardin's 5th principle was "we should put the best possible construction on differing positions..."⁴

If you've ever tried to practice this kind of approach, you will know that it is not easy. Indeed I think that part of why we so often fail to engage in this kind of behavior is that we feel threatened. We worry that we might "go over to other side" in some way and we might actually risk transforming our own understanding.

But of course that is what learning is.

In the midst of my own such fears, it has helped me to remember something that Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians: "when I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:1-2). Surely such faith may help us venture into real dialogue with difference? Surely we can risk "knowing nothing" in pursuit of what might just be deeper and richer knowing of God, who is at one

² Incidentally, one of my favorite descriptions of thoughtfully living into such a process within higher education can be found in Peter Elbow's book, *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Teaching and Learning*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

³ You can find them online here: <http://www.nplc.org/commonground/dialogue.htm>.

You might also be interested in a similar set that has been put out by the ELCA "Talking together about tough social issues," available online here: <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements-in-Process/JTF-Human-Sexuality/Resources/Discussion-and-Study-Aides/Talking-Together-as-Christians-about-Tough-Social-Issues.aspx>

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism: The 8th commandment.*

It's hard to whisper online

By Ryan Torma
Director of Learning Design & Technology

It's hard to whisper online. Admittedly, it can be fun to write a scathing blog comment or dash off a brilliant response to the idiocy of the creator of the discussion thread, or even send the "Fwd: To Address Book Re: Can you believe what he said?". The posts and emails are designed to prove just how smart I am. But for all of the indexed Google-ability and the newly available iPhone apps that allow me to publish my greatness from anywhere with a 3G network, there is still something lacking. It's hard to whisper online. Oh, for a time when I could be sure my hushed voice and cupped hands would let me say all those things I want to say to get a silent chuckle from my neighbor, and the rest of the world was never aware. Oh, for a time when I could tear someone else down in the pri-

vacy of my barely audible words punctuated with silent nods, all of which disappeared in a moment, right after I made it clear just how much better I am than...well, you know who. But for all of the technological advances that have allowed me to reply nastily to all, create (up to 10 minute) YouTube mockumentaries, or Twitter my disgust in 140 characters or less, they all still lack the provocative impermanence of a whisper. The digitized half-truths and alternate interpretations envisioned to make me look just a little better all seem to come off a little flat. They lack the color and inflection of tone or gesture, all tending toward an uncomfortable transparency that for some reason does not make me look quite as good as I hoped. The search-ability of the text, which at first seemed like such a boon, has lost its luster. While your foolishness is plain for anyone with a search engine, for some reason, my

name keeps getting mixed up in the search—and the posts are supposed to be about you, not me. I do like that with web-based technologies I have the opportunity to finely craft my skewering words before hitting "send." And the added bonus of not having to be burdened by your non-verbal reaction to my concoction of the truth is a clear technological advancement. But in a way, it is still not as good as a whisper. I miss the exclusivity of only an elite few people knowing my awesomeness. While I enjoy the instant gratification of telling you off, I miss being able to savor the unsaid words. But what can one do? I can't have my wrath and eat it too. So it seems that I'll just have to wait for web technologies to catch up with my half-spoken thoughts. Sadly, until the technology improves, all I'm left with online is speaking well of others or saying nothing at all, because it's hard to whisper online.

Editor from page 8

are brought here to talk about Jesus Christ. Our class texts, lecture periods, and, I hope, each edition of the Concord finally serve as gossip columns for God. Our purpose here is to learn to speak about God in the way God cares to be announced. In preaching this gospel we are called first to announce our betrayal of God in Jesus Christ, and then announce God's resurrection and conquering of this deceit. When we announce God

Editor to page 16

Neighbor from page 10

and the same time Creator, Savior and Holy Spirit? Any time I notice myself getting defensive about something I believe, I try to pause, take a deep breath and wonder if there is a way that I can believe what the other person is arguing for. In other words, rather than only applying a hermeneutics of suspicion, I also work towards the practice of a hermeneutics of generosity.⁵ I suppose some of you might be worrying that this kind of practice has to lead to ignorance, or at least naïve acceptance of false belief or even relativism? It is at moments like these when I confess to enjoying one of the many dialectics alive amongst us at Luther Seminary. While it's true that we often find ourselves caught up in the anger and hurt at critical competition, of refusing to really hear someone else's argument, we are also invited into the expansive practice of what Mark Noll has called "Lutheran irony." As Mark Edwards writes:

This "Lutheran irony," according to Noll, is the sense that precisely when Christians mount their most valiant public efforts for God, they run the greatest risk of substituting their righteousness for

the righteousness of Christ, and thereby subverting justification by faith. ...

This political insight has a rough analogue in the intellectual realm. Lutherans by their theology and tradition are inclined (or at least should be inclined) to suspect that precisely where Christians are certain that God depends on their holding the line on an intellectual matter, there they may be in most danger of substituting their truth for God's. ... This ironic awareness ... argues for intellectual humility.⁶

This humble and ironic grasp seems to me well attuned to the discipline of "putting the best construction" on someone else's position. The next time someone argues for a position you're certain has to be wrong, why not take a few minutes to try and see it as believable, even truth-full? Surely Christian faith is big enough, deep enough and strong enough to sustain such an attempt? The 8th commandment invites us in academic community into just such ventures.

⁵ Miles, Margaret R. "Hermeneutics of Generosity and Suspicion: Pluralism and Theological Education," *Theological Education* 23, Supplement (1987): 34-52.

⁶ Mark Edwards, "Characteristically Lutheran leanings," in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, Vol. 41, #1, Spring 2002, p. 6.

Habits of the heart

By Jen Kuntz

M.Div. Senior

My Mom always told me as a little kid, “If you don’t have anything nice to say, then don’t say anything at all.” Wise words from a wise woman. As I grow into adulthood, I have often wondered what to do about the silence that is left behind when you don’t say anything at all. Surely there are times when silence is well warranted. A few that come to mind off the top of my head are:

- Times of intense anger
- Moments of utter exhaustion when no verbal communication you speak makes any sense
- Times when you feel deeply wounded, barraged, berated, betrayed
- Times when you are on your own power trip and all the world is your oyster

The list could go on, but you get the point. Silence is, at times, golden. As sure as there are times when silence is a wise choice, so also are there times when speaking is to be preferred. In the words of singer John Mayer, “Say what you need to say... it’s better to say too much than to never say what you need to say again...” (You’re welcome in advance for putting this song in your head that will now repeat endlessly). So, what are we saying when we opt to speak to one another? Do we spew lies, unfounded stories and hurtful things, or do we speak words of affirmation, love, compassion and kindness?

Luther commends us in the explanation of the 8th commandment to follow my Mom’s rule, but also to “defend, speak well of and explain your neighbor’s actions in the kindest way.” Certainly this is a tall order. Especially when your neighbor stabs you in the back, cuts off the branch you’re standing on or leaves you to fend off the wolves alone. I can think of at least two formerly close friends who betrayed and abandoned me. After attempts to forgive and repair the relationship went unanswered, I’ve chosen to remain silent as far as our friendship goes.

Back in college when I worked as a counselor at Camp Lutherlyn in Butler, PA, we would sing a song about what we were to say to each other. It went something like “Be ye kind one unto another, tenderhearted forgiving one another. Even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. Do do doodlely do... Ephesians 4:32... bum bum.” This text in Ephesians calls us to not speak evil, but to build up one another (Ephesians 4.29-32). When was the last time you thanked someone for help they gave you, even if it was their job? When was the last time you offered words of encouragement or affirmation to someone simply to build them up in the body of Christ? Be reminded that psychological studies often report that it takes ten good experiences to counteract one negative experience. Saying nothing goes two ways: either you mitigate anguish for you and your neighbor or you leave a void that grows deeper between you, your neighbor and God. My challenge to you is to find one person each day and simply say something kind, affirming, positive or gracious to them. Be careful though. It might just become a habit!

True North

By Colin Grangaard

M.Div. Senior

If I had a nickel for every time I heard someone in a seminary class ask how the concepts we’re learning looked in the real world, I’d fill up a swimming pool and swim in them like Uncle Scrooge in the beginning credits of Duck Tales (I might actually ask for a handful of marshmallows instead, because nickels would hurt).

True North is a book that comes straight out of lived experience. But, it was not written about pastors. It was written by Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic, to gather the experience and wisdom of colleagues in the corporate world. He sat down with 125 present and past corporate CEO’s, presidents and entrepreneurs from multinational companies like GE, Best Buy, Starbucks, etc. at various stages in their careers to ask: How did you become an authentic leader?

There are two things going on in the book and most valuable are the interviews that make up the content of the book. These personal narratives that tell a story about forging a path, taking risks, personal integrity and discovering the value of an integrated life were surprising in their diversity. George presses the leadership to talk about dark nights of the soul when the directions their careers had taken felt empty, purposeless and irretrievable. Through the diversity of narratives, George also is able to gather

detailed narratives about the ideas, inspiration, integrity, community and risk-taking that breathed life back into these leaders. It was exciting to delve into the struggles that marked individual lives of figures in leadership and discover that these were often moments of greatest growth. Especially amongst leaders whose desert places are usually only viewed as opportunities for media shaming.

The other arc which directs the book is Bill George’s claims about the ways in which authentic leadership is formed. Rather than abstractly laying out a “five point plan” for leadership, he identifies factors that comprise strong identities through the narratives of the leaders themselves. In the midst of this financial crisis, it was helpful to read a consensus of leaders saying that money and prominence alone could never be a sustaining motivator. Let’s be frank, his idea of what comprises an authentic and value-driven person does seem a little anemic from a church leadership perspective. But, the chapter on values and principles alone was worth the price of the book because of its interviews which provided models of what faith-filled people living out their vocations look like.

In True North, I found simple truths expressed through the lives of the creative and innovative leaders of our business world. I’m sure you’d benefit from it too.

A very public ministry

By **Lindsay Colwell**
M.A. Senior

During the last few weeks I have been considering my future in between writing my thesis and the few hours of sleep that I get each night. Thankfully, a few days before Easter, my acceptance letter into the Master of Theology program came and I now have a plan for the next couple of years. I am hoping that a couple more years of writing and researching will prepare me for the PhD programs that I hope to apply for. All of this schooling will one day lead to my teaching college students about the Bible and hopefully not crushing their faith too much in the process.

You may think this is strange, but thinking about the next few years of school and the career that I hope to attain one day leads me to think about my Facebook profile. I know what you are thinking: That was quite the u-turn in the train of thought. However, I can assure you that my leap is logical. I have heard many of my graduating friends talking about how their lives will change when they become pastors and youth leaders. There is a certain amount of cau-

tion that they seem to be operating with when it comes to how they will present themselves to their new communities. Although I will not be entering ordained ministry and will never serve a church as a pastor, I have been thinking about the same issues.

I, like many of my fellow seminarians, spend way too much time on Facebook. Now, don't deny that many of you are as much of an addict as I am! I have seen all of your posts on the news feed and even chatted with many of you when you should have been studying or paying attention in class. In this age of instant information, status updates and mobile devices, what does all of this mean for our place as leaders in the church? When you think about your Facebook profile do you ever consider how the things that people post on your page may affect the way that people see you? When you log in and see a friend request from an acquaintance from high school or college, do you ever consider denying that request because you never know if something they post will be appropriate or not?

When posting information about yourself or pictures do you every hold back because perhaps it is not something that you want the entire world to have access to? As I was considering all of these questions I sent a message (via Facebook, of course) to Ben Durbin, a friend from college who also happens to be in the distributive learning M.Div program here at Luther Seminary. He is now a youth director in Duluth, Minn. I asked him how he dealt with being himself while at the same time being a person in ministry and role model to youth in the church. His answer voiced my thoughts perfectly. He told me that Facebook is a great tool for community building, especially when it comes to youth ministry. He said that in order to maintain a personal life and one's role in a congregation the best step is to maintain boundaries, limit accessibility. This is something that Facebook provides for its users.

What Facebook offers us is accountability. As leaders in the church, whether we are youth directors, camp counselors, pastors or teachers we need to hold ourselves accountable for our own actions. We need to be who we proclaim to be in our churches in our daily personal lives as well. Whether we are among our congregations or students, or among our family and friends we need to be consistent in what we do and say. I think Ben said it best in his note, "If its not, not only am I detracting from the message of the Gospel. I'm hurting myself by living a double life."

When we become leaders in the church we shouldn't be asked to give up on the life that we have had in the past, but instead we must be open and honest about who we are as people in the present. Who we are online should reflect who we are in our congregations and in our daily interactions. Perhaps it is true that ministry requires us to be held to a higher standard. But we are all still sinful human beings. No one is perfect, not even your pastor. Probably, especially not your pastor. All we can do is attempt to be consistent with our deeds, both online and off, and to be accountable to those we minister to. To be open and honest about who we are and who we have been is the best way that we can show that God's capacity for forgiveness is endless and that it is only through God's grace that forgiveness comes, not by any action of our own.

In the next

CONCORD

Doesn't the word "covet" sound like it ought to be a French chocolate candy? "Coh-vay." Delish. Our next issue is all about:

What you want

After all, it's not about needs, right? Our next issue is all about delicious human desire, specifically, the deep interest you have in your neighbor's house, wife, manservant or maidservant, cattle or anything else that is your neighbor's. Because really, most people at seminary don't have at least 3 out of 5 of the aforementioned, but still really, really want them. Do your milkshakes bring all your neighbor's cows to the yard? Are you tempted to coax away your neighbor's family or things? What is it about stuff and relationships in this world that we go after it with such vigor?

Also, this is our last issue and in addition to some of the usual suspects, we're going to bring you a covetously good time, including the traditional book lists and other exciting material to help get you ready for summer!

So start eyeing your neighbors goods. You need some inspiration for the article.

Articles are due **Monday, April 6.**

If interested in being solicited for articles in the future, please send an email to concord@luthersem.edu. Pay rate is \$15 per article for less than half page and \$20 per article of more than half page.

Faith and Money

When money speaks, truth is silent

By Jerry Hoffman

Director of the Center for Stewardship Leaders

When I was young, I remember going with my father to trade in the family car. I heard him say, "I have had absolutely no problems with my car." As a righteous kid I spoke up and said, "That's not true, Dad!" (It was a long time before I was invited to be with him when he was attempting to sell something again.)

Why is it that when money speaks, truth is silent? In a recent survey reported in Money Magazine, 1001 people were asked a series of questions such as: "Have you ever told your spouse you paid less for something than you really did — say, a great pair of shoes, or maybe that very cool 52-inch TV? Have you ever overstated a charitable tax deduction? Padded your expenses? Pulled the wool over your own eyes about your finances by shoving bills or bank statements into a drawer (out of sight, out of mind)?"

Almost all admitted to money deceptions. The study concluded that this behavior "had less to do with greed than with simple insecurity. We want people to see us as we wish we were rather than as we fear we are."

Twenty-five percent admitted to lying to others for personal gain. They acknowledged that they understated their income to IRS, inflated charitable giving contributions and padded expense reports. As students they falsified their financial need when applying for a student scholarship or loan.

But even if our motivation isn't financial, the consequences of lying often are. "Our efforts to control our image can spur us to spend too much, save too little, invest recklessly, and generally not plan for our future as well as we otherwise could."

The survey also indicated half of the people don't lie about money as much as they don't talk about it "because money is a sensitive topic." Far fewer said the same about politics or religion.

Why is it that when it comes to money, truth is silent? The problem is idolatry. We forget whose we are and exchange the truth for a lie. The truth is that our security rests in God alone. In baptism we are called to be stewards and entrusted with the privilege and the responsibility to act on behalf of God in all aspects of our lives.

Winning big



By Karen Treat

Parish Nurse

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)

I have found another show I love to watch: "The Biggest Loser". I love to watch the progression of the people on the show because it is so amazing and so motivating. The strength and perseverance of the participants

is more than I could imagine doing myself - and to stand in front of millions of people and subject myself to a public weigh-in is pretty much a "never" in my life's plan.

An opportunity to compete on "The Biggest Loser" gives opportunities for those who felt they had no hope in their lives when it came to weight a chance to succeed. Most of them would say their experience on the show has given them insight into who they are and how they do have the ability to do anything - even lose over 100 pounds. At the end of every episode, one member is voted off the "Loser Ranch" and they are told "You are not the biggest loser."

Losing the weight in "The Biggest Loser" happens because the participants change eating habits and engage immense amounts of exercise. They are pushed by a coach. Sometimes the coaching is not done in a nice voice. In fact, they are often screamed at, but it is done in a way that makes the participant want to do more. It could be described as not bearing false witness, but speaking honestly out of concern for the participant.

Wouldn't it be nice if we all had a personal coach who encouraged us to live a life of health and wellness? Wouldn't it be nice if we lifted each other up in our weaknesses and gave each other the ability to see how wonderful we really are and what potential we really have? Wouldn't it be nice if we could tell ourselves how much God loves us each day? Just think how great we would feel and what we may do. We might be ready for anything. Thanks be to God.

Lawyers from page 5

discredit your opponent's case, using her prior inconsistent statements, bringing up past prior acts or breaches of the law that relate to his inability to tell the truth and the most famous: cross-examination. Cross-examination allows the attorney to question any "hostile" witness after they have testified by asking leading questions. The answer from the witness is usually limited to "yes" or "no." They are not afforded an opportunity to explain their answer until their attorney can ask rehabilitating questions during "redirect examination." Redirect examination can

be too late. Much of the time, damage has already been done.

I handled divorce and custody cases so I got to see firsthand how all involved are condemned by the law. If a case went to trial, more often than not, both parties had their sins exposed and were dirtied in the mud-slinging.

Outside of ensuring fair parenting rights and a share of the pension plan, there is little the law can do to bring comfort. A fair division of the marital estate is a poor balm for battle wounds inflicted from fighting with

the one person you promised to love until death.

Instead, my clients needed something I could not give at the time: The promise of God's unconditional love that comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ. My clients needed to hear the testimony that Jesus Christ entered our pain and took our sins on the cross - and that through his death and resurrection, we too arise in a new life with him. The law was able to give my client that old sofa that she had prior to the marriage, but only the Gospel can give her real, new life.

Sweet Sound of Speculation

By Jeni Grangaard
M.Div. Senior

Death Cab for Cutie’s 2008 offering *Narrow Stairs*, their second major record label album and sixth overall studio album, didn’t make it to my best of list for 2008; in fact it made it to my “meh,” or apathetic category. Described as a departure from both the “undergraduate longing” that marked *Transatlanticism* and *The Photo Album* and the “looming mortality” of *Plans*, *Narrow Stairs* offers a more “generalized existential angst” (Marc Hogan, Pitchfork Media). Sure, Death Cab for Cutie has been successful in expressing their emotion; they’re so emo that it became a genre around their band’s genesis. With the release of *Plans*, Death Cab signaled a movement towards adulthood, something I was looking forward to. *Narrow Stairs* is boring, back to the same old, self-hating and almost pathetic music that worked better when they were less situated and much younger.

But, how might I offer a critique while interpreting a musician’s work “in the best possible light?” Is silence the best option? Shall I mention only its good parts? Surely I need not fill a page of this paper on music I don’t find particularly good, but perhaps something helpful can be gleaned from listening to music not liked and discussing it as if the best intentions were fulfilled, even when in disagreement and dislike about it. Is there room for honest yet gentle critique and an eagerness to hear people succeed? The music critiquing business seeks to tear down established artists whenever possible all the while searching for the next best thing. But here, for me, how might I re-interpret an album I don’t like very much?

I met Will, a son of a congregant from internship, when he returned from Iraq around Christmastime. During his second visit in May, we talked about new music and, lo and behold, the new Death Cab album came up. I didn’t like it and I was happy to share my honest dislike. Incredulous and kindly, he asked if I had listened to “Your New Twin-Sized Bed,” which I hadn’t, really. Of course I had listened to it as I was discerning and discovering the album, but nothing fancy struck me. He gently urged me to listen to the “amazing” lyrics. Listen I did and I learned to love the song, and later, more of the album. His gentle reminder (or rebuke) reframed and reinterpreted how I saw the album, though I am still generally apathetic towards it.

Re-listening to the album, I found its gem, “Grapevine Fires,” perfect for an issue on gossip and the interpretation of the actions of others in the best possible light. The song paints a picture of witnessing a wildfire burn everything down while its destruction grows around you, helpless and toothless to stop it:

When the wind picked up the fire spread/ and the grapevine

scene left for dead/ the northern sky like the end of days// The wake up call to a rented room sounded like an alarm of impending doom/ to remind us it’s only a matter of time/ before we all burn// We bought some wine and some paper cups/ Near your daughter’s school and we picked her up/ Drove to a cemetery on a hill// We watched the plumes paint the skies gray/ as she laughed and danced through the field of graves/ There I knew we’d be alright

This song is an appropriate metaphor for life together in community, which is beautiful and yet dangerous at the same time. Feelings of belonging can be met with shame at any moment. News can spread about one member or another with speed and viciousness, burning down a community as we “watch the plumes paint the sky gray” and “laugh and dance through the field of graves.”

Henri Nouwen, in his book *Reaching Out*, quotes Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* in talking about gossip as an act of loneliness:

“When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip. We rarely meet a man who can tell us any news which he has not read in a newspaper, or been told by his neighbor; and, for the most part, the only difference between us and our fellow is that he has seen the newspaper, or been out to tea, and we have not. In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly to the post office [or in our case, Facebook]. You may depend on it, that the poor fellow who walks away with the greatest number of letters proud of his extensive correspondence has not heard from himself in a long while” (*Walden*, pp. 723-724).

Gossip is a mark of a community turned in upon itself and yet out of touch with itself. It is normal and quite common.

And the news reports on the radio said it was getting worse/ as the ocean air fanned the flames/ but I couldn’t think of anywhere that I would’ve rather been to watch it all burn away

More than likely, you’ve been on both sides of the 8th Commandment as both perpetrator and victim or perhaps spectator of the dance of deceit and slander. I know I have been. Is it a hungry circle that knows no end? What might break us out of the cycle and into something new? I don’t think that it is a matter of just not breaking the commandment, as if it was possible. I think it is a matter of both confession and forgiveness, living as if we believed in reconciliation.

The firemen worked in double shifts/ with prayers for rain on their lips/ they knew it was only a matter of time.

For now, I’m enjoying being reconciled to *Narrow Stairs* and looking forward to what might be coming next from Death Cab for Cutie.

Beach preacher from page 4

of Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbors, for we are all members of one body.” Dude, are you serious? I have to say nice things about that girl who has never been nice to me? You mean I have to speak kindly about that creepy man in my congregation who hugs me a little too tightly on

Sunday morning?

There’s a reason why our brains don’t include a video camera. The blackmail would get out of control. Real footage is bad enough. Blogging about memories can hold the same destruction if told in too much detail, especially when other folks are included. There will always be situations and people who

make us want to speak negatively. I pray for each one of us that the Holy Spirit continues to seep down deep into our hearts as we monitor our words and the way we speak of one another. I may as well say it: If you are interested in reading Amber’s blog, you can check it out here: <http://amberincali.blogspot.com>. Peace.

Calendar of events

By Marie Olson
M.Div. Middler

Living Green Expo

Free!
From May 2-3 the Minnesota State Fairgrounds will host the Living Green Expo! This event includes many exhibits, workshops and attractions to help people learn how to live more ecologically sustainable. These exhibits and programs not only encourage health, but they also help the earth's health. Check out their website for more information: www.livinggreen.org

Science Museum of Minnesota

\$11 for exhibits only
For a great day of entertainment and learning, the Science Museum of Minnesota has plenty of exhibits to keep you busy for hours! This museum boasts the largest whole Triceratops skeleton, a new sphere exhibit which shows realistic depictions of earth as you might see it from the moon and until May 3rd, has an exhibit called "Goose Bumps! The Science of Fear!" I just went last weekend and I strongly recommend the Goosebumps exhibit. The science museum has plenty of hands-on ways to learn which are fun for all ages!
If you want more than just the exhibits, the current Omnitheater movies through June 11 include "Super Speedway" and "Grand Canyon Adventure: River at Risk." Check out the museum's website for more information: www.smm.org

Vali Hi Drive-In Movie

Only \$7.50 for three movies! (or free for kids under 12!)
Located off of highway I-94 in Lake Elmo, this is a great evening and night event! Get there early to enjoy sitting outside while enjoying a picnic. Bring a small barbecue or just get some snacks from the concessions stand. Stay for one, two or three movies, depending on how late you can make it! The first movie starts at dusk. Check out their website www.valihi.com for more details and the current movie showings!

Walker Art Museum and Sculpture Garden

\$6-10 or \$0
The Walker Art Center has a wonderful col-

lection of art to view at the low cost of \$6 for students, \$10 for adults, or come on Thursday when entrance to the galleries is FREE to all! One of the current featured exhibits is a collection called "Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton." Peyton is quoted as having been part of "a handful of artists to develop a peculiar hybrid of realism and conceptualism." Come to see the great visual art collection, stroll across the street to see the free sculpture garden which hold the famous "Spoonbridge and Cherry," or check out their website to get tickets to one of their many performing art shows including films, lectures and dance performances! www.walkerart.org/index.wac

Weisman Art Museum

Free!
If your interest is piqued by art and you also like great deals (as in, free!) another wonderful museum to check out is the Weisman Art museum on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota's campus. This museum is known for its unique architectural design and also its collection of contemporary art. The current featured exhibit is called "Changing Identity: Recent Works by Women Artists from Vietnam." For more information about the Weisman check out their website: www.weisman.umn.edu/index.html

The Minnesota Twins!

\$4 and up
Don't miss the Twins last season in the Metrodome! As usual, Wednesday nights are student nights where upper deck seats are only \$4 and dollar dogs are sold until they run out! Other deals include Market Monday where the Home Run Porch ticket prices are based off the closing value of the Dow Jones Industrial Average the prior Friday and Tuesdays boast half-price Home Run porch tickets. Go enjoy this American tradition and cheer for the Twins because, as we all know, this is Twins Territory!

Need a laugh?

\$5-\$15
The Acme Comedy Club located in the historic warehouse district of Minneapolis has a wide range of stand-up comedians and a reputation for hosting some major headliners. Don't worry, it's affordable, too! Tuesday through Friday is student ID night (I'm sure our Luther Seminary Student ID will work, as well!) where you can get tickets for only five dollars! Check the website to see who

might be making you laugh yourself silly!
www.acmecomedycountry.com

Need even more laughs?

\$8-12
Another fun comedy venue is Comedy Sportz located in Uptown. This is an improvisational comedy show where two teams compete by playing different and hilarious improv games, similar to what you might have seen on the television show "Whose Line is it Anyway?". Comedy Sportz describe themselves as "Fun enough for a bachelor party. Clean enough for your grandma." Check out their website for more details: www.comedysportztc.com

Is the semester starting to drain you? Here are some places to "whine" about the stress of seminary while drinking wine on dime! Remember, Jesus saved the best wine for last at the wedding at Cana, so he would agree that though you are a student on a budget, you deserve some high - or at least medium - quality wine too! These restaurants have some wine specials which are worth checking out:

Spill the Wine, www.spillthewinerestaurant.com/ Monday nights has half-price bottles of selected bottles of wine. Monday-Thursday evenings from 4-7 or Friday evenings from 4-6, certain bottles are only \$15.

Lucia's Wine Bar, www.lucias.com, Happy Hour every night from 9 p.m.-midnight featuring a \$6 glass of white and a \$6 glass of red.

Zeno's Café, www.zenocafe.com, Happy Hour every night from 3-7 p.m. complete with \$10 or \$20 bottomless wine tasting, in addition to a number of light meals and delectable dessert plates.

Bryant Lake Bowl, www.bryantlakebowl.com, from 10 p.m.-2 a.m. every Tuesday Bryant Lake Bowl offers \$12 bottles of wine on selected bottles.

Degidios, www.degidios.com, Monday and Tuesday nights have half-price bottles of wine.

If you know of other great deals that you'd like to share with the seminary community, please email them to molson002@luthersem.edu

The Concord asks...

What rumor would you like to spread on campus?



"That I'm a secret Marxist."
—Matt Metevelis, M.Div. Senior

"Luther is risen! He is risen indeed!"
—Rachel Fuller, M.Div. Middler



"I already do that! ... Oh, and did you know that Beau Nelson actually lives in the stacks?"
—Nina Joy, M.A. Senior

"David Lose's sweaters are really made in China!"
—Beau Nelson, M.Div. Middler

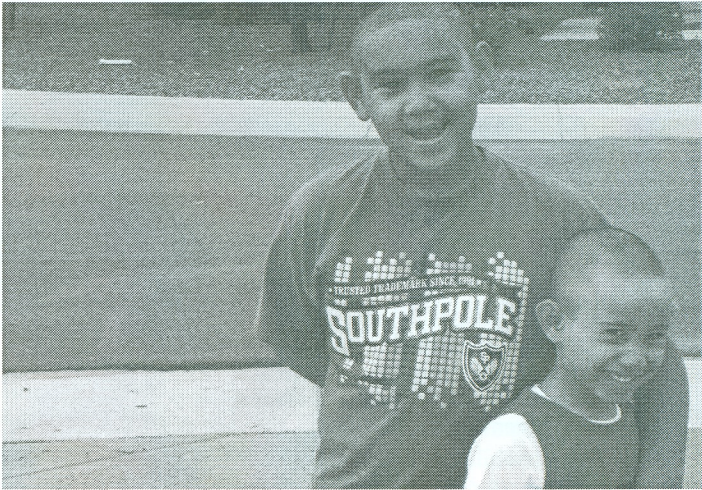


"Due to the economic crisis, Luther Seminary is being bought out by the Presbyterians."
—Sarah Brouwer, M.Div. Middler

"In an attempt to save money Luther Seminary is planning on closing the Cafeteria and busing students to IKEA for 99-cent breakfast and Swedish meatball lunches."
—John Sauter, M.Div. Middler



Down the Hill
Luther Seminary through younger eyes



Call of Duty

By Everett (11) and Maddox (6) Fair
Sons of Tony Fair

God gave us the commandment that we should not lie or tell stories about one another that are not true. This commandment was given to us for our own protection and so that we can live together in peace. It's one world. It would be a very sad and crazy world if we were to be telling lies or bad stories about one another all the time. I don't want my friends or other people to not like me because someone told a lie about me. I wouldn't do that to anyone else either. One time a kid got mad at me and told my friends bad stuff about me that wasn't true. It made me really sad because friends didn't want to play with me anymore. I told my teacher and she made the kid tell the truth and everybody became my friend again. That made me happy. Telling lies or spreading gossip only creates more problems. I don't want to have problems. I want to have fun.

The best way to have fun is to respect each other and focus on the good things about each other. I like it when people say good things about me and what I do. Everett says, "Many times people tell me I'm a good singer." Maddox says, "Yeah, and sometimes people tell me I'm a good dancer." That makes us feel good and want to dance and sing more. I'd rather talk about my friends in a good way like, "he's a good hitter in baseball" or "he's really good at the PS3 game, 'Call of Duty.'" You can always tell a good friend because he doesn't get caught up in telling stories about others. I try my best to be a good friend. Following the 8th commandment is a good way to do that.

Editor from page 10

we are to speak with a loud, clear and public voice to tell the old, old story. In doing so we defend and speak well of our Lord. We explain our God's peculiar actions in the kindest possible way because it is the way God desires the message to be given so that faith and trust is created.

We are called to speak loudly and truly about our God. In the same way, we are called, even in our most difficult moments, to speak loudly and truly about our neighbor.